

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 18 July 2002

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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Questions to the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language

Library Facilities

Q7 Jonathan Morgan: What plans does the Minister have to develop library facilities in Wales? (OAQ19089)

The Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language (Jenny Randerson): The people's information and communications technology network in Wales will bring all public libraries online by the end of 2002, and will provide assisted internet access and other ICT services to the public. The number of computer terminals in Welsh public libraries will rise from about 200 to 2,000. No Welsh authority plans to charge for the service.

I have also introduced public library standards in Wales to improve the quality of our library services.

Investment in Sport in Mid Wales

Q8 Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on investment in sport in mid Wales? (OAQ19035)

Jenny Randerson: Mid Wales benefits through the Sports Council for Wales's initiatives as well as from Sportlot funding, which is used to support a variety of sport related projects. Last year, for example, Powys received £700,000 in Sportlot funding, more than any other local authority area in Wales.

Proposed Broadcasting Bill

Q9 Rosemary Butler: What discussions has the Minister had with her counterparts in Westminster about the proposed broadcasting Bill? (OAQ19034)

Jenny Randerson: I have had discussions with Tessa Jowell, the UK Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; Dr Kim Howells, Minister for Tourism, Film and Broadcasting; and Don Touhig, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales. I have used each occasion to explain and promote the views of the Welsh Assembly Government, and broadcasters in Wales, on the proposals that have now appeared in the draft Communications Bill.

National Lottery Grants

Q10 Ann Jones: What is the Minister doing to tackle the relatively low level of applications for National Lottery grants from some of the most deprived communities in Wales? (OAQ19046)

Jenny Randerson: I am committed to fair distribution of lottery funding to areas and groups across Wales. In March, I announced a new joint initiative between new opportunities fund and the community

fund called fair share. That targets lottery funding at disadvantaged areas that have received less than average levels of lottery support.

Photography

Q11 David Melding: Will the Minister make a statement on measures to promote photography in Wales? (OAQ19028)

Jenny Randerson: The Arts Council of Wales sponsors Ffotogallery, the National Photography Centre of Wales, and gave £103,000 in 2002-03. The arts council supports six other development galleries across Wales that exhibit photographic works.

Welsh Broadcasting Study

Q12 Cynog Dafis: Will the Minister set a timescale for the implementation of the study on Welsh broadcasting under the auspices of Cymru'n Creu? (OAQ19029)

Jenny Randerson: I have held a series of meetings with broadcasters in Wales and have taken the opportunity to sound out their opinions on my proposal. I will announce the exact nature, remit and timetable for the study in the autumn.

Question 13 (OAQ19048) withdrawn.

Funding for Dance

Q14 Geraint Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on public funding available for dance in Wales? (OAQ19107)

Jenny Randerson: In 2001-02, the Arts Council of Wales revenue funded production companies, community dance organisations and strategic umbrella bodies to a total of nearly £800,000. A further £166,000 was made available for dance from the lottery. The revenue spend this year is likely to be almost £1 million.

Funding to Upgrade Grounds

Q15 Eleanor Burnham: Will the Minister make a statement on the funding available for a team in the league of Wales to upgrade its grounds? (OAQ19098)

Jenny Randerson: I understand that the Union of European Football Associations can help national football associations meet new club licensing criteria by making interest-free loans of up to £1 million available. UEFA says that the licensing criteria are flexible and include youth development as a priority, as well as infrastructure and improved administration.

Questions to the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad

Modulated Funds

Q8 Phil Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the modulated funds collected from producers' commodity payments in 2001? (OAQ19073)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad (Michael German): The funds modulated from direct subsidies in Wales in 2001-02 amounted to £2.87 million.

Antur Cig Cymru

Q9 Delyth Evans: Can the Minister make a statement on progress made in setting up Antur Cig Cymru? (OAQ19080)

Michael German: Several meetings have taken place with the parties concerned, and I chaired the latest meeting on Friday 12 July. While good progress has been made, some issues still need to be resolved, concerning membership and legal structure. These discussions are subject to a confidentiality undertaking between the parties concerned.

Welsh Development Agency

Q10 Jonathan Morgan: What meetings has the Minister had with representatives of the Welsh Development Agency about marketing Welsh produce abroad? (OAQ19057)

Michael German: I met officers of the Welsh Development Agency's Food Directorate on 5 July to discuss the marketing of Welsh produce abroad. I have also just returned from a very successful visit to the Fancy Food Fair in New York, involving the WDA's Food Directorate and Food from Britain.

20-day Standstill Rule

Q11 Kirsty Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the 20-day standstill rule? (OAQ19058)

Michael German: Discussions about the 20-day standstill rule are ongoing. No decisions will be taken until after the foot and mouth disease inquiries have reported later this month.

Recent Agricultural Council

Q12 Christine Gwyther: Will the Minister give a report on the recent agricultural council? (OAQ19119)

Michael German: I attended the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Brussels on 15 July. The meeting was the first opportunity for the council to discuss the proposals published on 10 July by the European Commission, following the mid-term review of the common agriculture policy.

The broad principles underpinning the commission's approach is for the common agriculture policy to become more relevant to the needs of the farming community and the interests of consumers, while making more progress on sustaining the environment and enhancing support for rural development. This is all consistent with the Assembly Government's long-term direction for agriculture in Wales, as highlighted in 'Farming for the Future'.

Prior to the council meeting, I impressed on Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Ministers that it will be important that Welsh producers are not disadvantaged by the outcome of the forthcoming negotiations on the commission's overall package. In particular, I made clear the priority required to achieving an increased share for the UK of the EU's resources for rural development.

The commission's proposals are the start of the negotiating process. There is much detail to be explored and considered over the coming months before final agreement is reached. I will attend future meetings of the council, and the Assembly Government will be represented at every key stage of the negotiations in London and Brussels, to safeguard the interests of the Welsh farming community.

Cynllun Mynediad i Ffermwyr Ifanc

Q13 Elin Jones: A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ar y cynnydd o ran datblygu cynllun mynediad i ffermwyr ifanc? (OAQ19069) [W]

Michael German: Gofynnodd fy rhagflaenydd i swyddogion ystyried pa mor ymarferol yr oedd cynllun lle y gallai ffermwr sy'n ymddeol ddefnyddio fferm i gychwyn blwydd-dâl i dalu am bensiwn, gan roi cyfle i berson ifanc brynu'r fferm dros gyfnod o amser y cytunir arno. Mae'r gwaith hwnnw'n parhau. Er hynny, bydd yn rhaid ystyried unrhyw gynigion yng ngoleuni'r galw am adnoddau o rannau eraill y gyllideb amaethyddiaeth a datblygu gwledig.

Access Scheme for Young Farmers

Q13 Elin Jones: Will the Minister make a statement on progress made to develop an access scheme for young farmers? (OAQ19069) [W]

Michael German: My predecessor asked officials to consider the feasibility of a scheme whereby a retiring farmer might use a farm to set up an annuity to fund a pension, and thus enable a young person to purchase the farm over an agreed period. That work is continuing. However, any proposals that may emerge will have to be considered in light of competing demands for resources from elsewhere in the agriculture and rural affairs budget.

Hunting with Dogs

Q14 John Griffiths: Will the Minister make a statement on the progress of the consultation on hunting with dogs? (OAQ19117)

Michael German: This is a matter for the Chair of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

Gwaharddiad Symud 20 diwrnod (DEFRA)

Q15 Cynog Dafis: Pa sylwadau y mae'r Gweinidog wedi eu gwneud i DEFRA ynglŷn â'r gwaharddiad symud 20 diwrnod? (OAQ19064) [W]

Michael German: Mae Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru yn cymryd rhan lawn mewn trafodaethau rhyngadrannol parhaus ar symud da byw.

20-day Standstill (DEFRA)

Q15 Cynog Dafis: What representations has the Minister made to DEFRA concerning the 20 day standstill? (OAQ19064) [W]

Michael German: The Welsh Assembly Government is fully engaged in ongoing inter-departmental discussions on livestock movements.